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JAPAN AND AMERICA

TALES AND THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF

BY JOHN COLE McKIM, M.A., B.D.

ONE afternoon in late October, I was standing in the front entry-way of the mission residence, holding a baby and talking to a native woman. A startled look in her eyes caused me to turn quickly. A man was standing five or six feet from me in the doorway leading to the back passage raising a heavy stick for the apparent purpose of felling me from behind. His face wore one of those ludicrously stern grimaces with which the heroes of the Oriental stage are wont to terrify their enemies. He was not noticeably drunk.

His pause at my sudden turn gave me time to hand the baby to the woman and take my own stick from the hatrack nearby; whereupon the fellow lowered his cudgel and, taking from his kimono a greasy pamphlet, pretended that he had entered (by the back door) for the purpose of offering it for sale. A glance at the pamphlet as I escorted him to a side gate showed me the ideographs *Bei-Koku* (America).

Having put the man out of the side gate and closed it after him, I returned through the house, and after a few moments went out through my front gate upon an errand. This gate is perhaps forty feet from the side gate and fronts upon the same street (Americans would probably think of it as an alley). The roadway was blocked by a crowd of perhaps a hundred people, mostly men and boys, and the man whom I had just ejected was making them a grandiloquent speech which turned to violent shrieking and gesticulation when he caught sight of me. I made out such words as *Bei-Koku* (America) and *Tantei* (Spy). The crowd, which was composed mainly of neighbors who had seen me come and go among them for nearly seven years, was amused but not excited, and readily made room for me to pass along the street upon my errand.

After I had walked some yards, a warning shout caused me to turn about. The ruffian had rushed in through the gate which I had just left. No one in the crowd made any effort to stop him but neither was there any attempt to block the lane which they had opened for my passage and through which I hurried back.

Before I could come up with the man (a stranger in the neighborhood), he had rushed through the house, terrified with his cudgel two octogenarian women who had found shelter with me when ejected by their landlord, seized a loaf of bread as he passed through the kitchen, and returned to his heroics outside the side gate. The man-servant who tried to interfere with him would have been roughly handled had I not intervened. This intervention brought another stream of invective from the fellow, who drew a noosed cord from his sleeve (a threat of strangulation). I closed and barred the side gate, did the same to the front gate (it is a peculiarity of the ordinary Japanese gate that it can be fastened only from the inside) and then sent the man by a *back* gate (opening on another "street") to the police box nearby.

Warned by some one in the crowd of the approach of the police, the man left a bicycle upon which he had been riding and made off down the alley. In a few moments two policemen, both well known and friendly to me, arrived on the scene. One remained to take my statement and to keep an eye on the bicycle while the other made after the thief.

They caught the man without much difficulty, slapped his face, took the bicycle saying that they would keep it over night as a punishment, and, writing down his address,—a nearby village,—told him to call in the morning for his bicycle. I got back my bread, also, after it had reposed for some time in the man's bosom.

I asked the police what they intended to do. They said that this would depend upon whether or not the bicycle were a stolen one. So far as his intrusion and misconduct upon the mission premises was concerned, he had already had his face slapped for that; and although he had taken the bread, still the police did not think theft his motive in entering the house. Neither did I. But, I urged, was not such conduct a public menace? Might he not repeat the performance? The policeman said that he would keep an eye on my house for the next few days. I did not mean

my house in particular, I told him, knowing by this time perfectly well what was in the officer's mind but wondering what he would say. He said: "*O so dessu ka?*", which may be freely rendered: "Oh, really?" Later, talking it over with a friend, we decided that it would be unwise to press the matter further. Spectators and police had been, on the whole, inclined to take my side if any. This, we agreed, was very gratifying.

I relate this trivial incident in some detail because it not only illustrates the extent to which the seeds of suspicion against Americans are sown in Japan (an American *stranger* would almost certainly *not* have had the crowd even mildly on his side) but also because it shows the fallacy involved in the statement that unfriendly utterances emanate from irresponsible sources on both sides of the Pacific.

Imagine a Japanese, living on an income derived from sources in his own country, in an American town of corresponding size and importance,—say Binghamton, N. Y. Let us suppose that he has lived on the same street for seven years, well and favorably known to his neighbors. His house is entered by a rough from a neighboring village who makes as if to assault him from behind with a possibly deadly weapon, terrifies aged Americans to whom the Japanese has given shelter, defends his conduct to a crowd of neighbors (some of whom have reason to regard themselves as beneficiaries of the foreigner) by an address on international politics, and is finally dismissed with a box on the ear by the police. To complete the analogy we must suppose that genuinely friendly Americans advise the Japanese resident that to make a formal complaint would antagonize the local sentiment now mildly sympathetic toward the aggrieved foreigner.

The Japanese people at home are gentle, kindly and industrious. *Mutatis mutandis* their domestic morals compare well with those of some western lands. They are not to be judged by the riffraff who flock to foreign ports, the adventurers who make life a burden to Koreans, Manchurians or Siberians, or even by the powerful minority of militarists who, whatever the nominal forms of government, still seem to exercise a governing though diminishing influence in all matters, especially those relating to taxation and foreign relations, which affect their special interests.

The common people of Japan (especially the country people) are, on the whole, naïve, lovable and generous. People who at home are not fretted by children, are almost certain to fall in love with these children of the soil of *Dai Nippon*. "The Japanese," wrote St. Francis Xavier, "are the delight of my heart." It is impossible that they should have this warm generosity of childhood without something of its violences as well. And the violence of childhood, when exercised with the strength of an adult, is not a laughing matter. Its appearance may (like the incident above narrated) suggest opera bouffe. But it may easily develop serious consequences. These consequences we would fain avert without injury to the child, who does not cease to be lovable because strong beyond his years. They are best averted when the adult is stronger still but obviously kindly. For the child will grow up some time and nothing will have been gained if he arrive at man's estate nursing a sense of genuine grievance. It is fortunate indeed if the supposed grievances have little or no foundation of fact but are demonstrably the result of malicious misinformation.

I would not press this analogy too closely. *Childish* is not a complimentary adjective nor one which could be justly applied to the Japanese people as a whole. If the bulk of the country people display something of the limitations of childhood, this is more than offset by simple charm of the sort that opens the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. Only, unfortunately, it behooves us to consider, in this article, the limitations.

It has become a sort of fashion with certain people to utter vicarious confessions whereby they may claim all the credit which accrues to penitence and humility, without incurring the opprobrium which attaches itself to honest and straightforward sinners. "The church must with shame confess . . ." resolve gatherings of Christians (generally informal), and expect to be hailed as at once humble, frank, courageous and blameless. As for the reputation of the Church, that may take care of itself.

Similar utterances are somewhat in vogue with a few Americans in foreign residence. But true confession is never exculpatory, and this unctuous donning of the garb of penitence in order to disassociate oneself from the sins one wishes to impute to others

is quintessential hypocrisy, as damaging to all but selfish interest as honest denunciation may, at times, prove invigorating.

Writing for an American magazine words primarily intended for American eyes, I have no hesitation in saying that a great deal, not so much of what has been done as of what has been said, in and about California and its immigration problems, is calculated to invite the merited disapproval of judicious observers whether American or foreign. Especially is it true that objections to a foreign race on the alleged ground of the superior virility, fecundity, and industry of that race earn for those who raise them a just contempt. For they imply not only that their own countrymen or country women (in the California matter it is largely a case of the latter) are inferior on some or all of these points, but that this inferiority is so far inherent as to admit of no future improvement.

But when all this has been admitted, the fact remains that anti-American sentiment in Japan gains its strength far more from propaganda carried on within the Empire than from any misdeeds of sections of the American people. If the immigration problem were the real cause of this irritation it would be equally, or to a greater extent, directed against the British Empire because of conditions in Australia and Canada where Japanese are excluded from vastly greater and more sparsely settled areas than is the case in any part of the United States.

This alone is enough to show that the anti-American propaganda is not based merely upon Californian discrimination against Japanese immigrants, but suggests either a special animosity against our country or else a settled intention to deal piecemeal with the countries bordering on the Pacific. Aggression in Siberia and Manchuria (which has been greatly facilitated by the existence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance) seems to suggest the pursuit of a divisive policy directed against those who may be expected to object to such procedure;—a policy as much in keeping with Chinese diplomatic tradition as it serves the purposes of militarist strategy. The combination is dangerous. In old China the policy itself, without the militarism, was employed with a skill which often evoked the admiration of the very peoples whose encroachments upon Chinese territory were checked by it.

If those who wish to excite (and have measurably succeeded in exciting) Japanese animosity against America had a valid and obvious grievance it is not likely that they would risk resort to distortion of fact and invention of falsehood. Yet this is what is done, not merely by a section of journalists corresponding to our "yellow" press, but by or through the greater part of the newspaper world. For example:

(1) When the recently enacted California land legislation was first proposed, the cabled accounts published in practically all of the papers appear to have omitted all mention of the saving clauses whereby it was made clear that no rights guaranteed by treaty were to be infringed upon. It was only after the cabled news had been current for some weeks that the mails brought the full text which was, I think, first published in *The Japan Advertiser*, a paper owned by an American, edited by a Scot, and published in the English language primarily for the benefit of the English-speaking public of Tokyo and Yokohama. This paper deserves high praise for its services to the cause of sound journalism and international comity.

(2) Three charges of espionage directed against officials in the diplomatic and consular services of the United States are recent examples of a recurrent evil.

(a) The papers published reports alleging that the military attaché of the United States' Embassy in Tokyo had been making improper attempts to secure Japanese military maps. This could easily have been corrected by an official statement of Japanese military men who knew the facts, but, so far as I know, the first clear refutation was contained in letters made public by our own Department of State. In point of fact, a Japanese who had accompanied the troops to Siberia as civil engineer had obtained possession of some military maps, originally Russian (not Japanese) property and, taking them to the embassy, offered them for sale and left them for examination. He was notified to call for them as they were not wanted at the embassy, but, before he could do so, was apprehended by the Japanese authorities.

(b) In the fall of 1920, the papers generally published a report accusing the naval attaché of our Embassy of espionage at a

naval station. In point of fact, the attaché had been making a customary tour of inspection at the invitation of the authorities and under the escort of Japanese naval officers. A curious fact in this connection is that the report had a prominent place in the news columns of one paper which was at that time publishing a series of editorial articles in the interest of friendship with America. The honor of the Japanese officials concerned obviously required the official correction which was, in a few days, forthcoming.

(c) A Japanese sergeant major (according to the *Yomiuri* newspaper of Nov. 14) had been for some time in treaty with the American consul at Taihoku, Formosa, for the sale of secret maps and plans of fortifications, but, when returning from a secret visit to the Consulate, was apprehended by the gendarmes "who had posted a cordon in advance."

The facts as given out by the American Embassy are that last April a Japanese called on Mr. H. B. Hitchcock, then American Consul at Taihoku and offered to sell him secret maps and plans. Mr. Hitchcock refused to discuss the matter or to have anything to do with the man. In October Mr. Hitchcock returned to the United States and Mr. Dooman was appointed to the Consulate. He had been but a few weeks at the post when he was visited by a Japanese who made the same proposal. Mr. Dooman asked the man to wait and at once telephoned to the police to inform them that a man offering to sell maps of the fortifications was in his office. Gendarmes were dispatched and as the man left the Consulate he was arrested.

The *Japan Advertiser* (Nov. 16) to whom the statement just cited was given, makes the following comment:

It is unfortunately characteristic of the Japanese press that the story reaches their readers as a typical "scheme of treason" in which American officials are represented as having dealings with traitors. In reality, as the facts show, the Japanese military authorities are indebted to the American Consul for the prompt information which enabled them to arrest the suspected culprit.

It really does seem as though those responsible for the dissemination of such reports were trading upon the fact that a lie is hard to catch up with.

It is coming to be more and more plain that the militarists are

violently anti-American and incidentally anti-Christian. Reports from Korea alone are enough to suggest this. I suppose that the average Japanese now believes, or is inclined to believe from the inspired reports that he constantly sees in the papers, that American missionaries are largely responsible for the Korean risings and for anti-Japanese sentiment in China. A Kokusai (press service) dispatch dated Seoul, Nov. 17 and translated in the *Japan Advertiser* (Nov. 18, p. 5, col. 4) states that a certain missionary is suspected of anti-Japanese sentiment. The suspicion is grounded, we are naïvely informed, upon the fact that "the Japanese burnt his schools and shot his pupils to death for alleged misdemeanors against the Japanese. The Japanese are watching this missionary with particular care."

The three espionage reports all published in 1920 are interesting and the two involving offers for sale of secret maps are especially significant and typical. Whether cases of genuine treason or not, it is significant that, in all instances, it was American officials who were selected to be the recipients of these advances.

What the American public apparently does not realize is that the masses of the Japanese people, kindly and peaceloving as they are, sincerely think or are coming to think that their preservation as a nation may necessitate war against the United States; and although it may well be that the leaders desire armaments rather than war, the only state of mind in which the heavily over-taxed Japanese will continue to vote supplies for a large army is pregnant with the gravest possibilities of danger.

The effect that this propaganda is likely to have upon uninformed American opinion is not likely to lessen the danger. Educated Americans (as is natural) are much less intimately acquainted with conditions in Japan than Japanese of a corresponding class are *en rapport* with European and American circumstances. Even those Americans who have travelled in the Far East seldom realize the vast difference in degree of modernization as between Tokyo and the great ports on the one hand and large districts of the interior on the other, where those villagers who can read are seldom beyond the "if you see it in the paper it's so" stage of development. The last thing that Americans would desire, could

they but see them, is a war which would bring untold misery to these kindly people.

But since most Americans can take only an exterior view of Japan, the impression gains ground that the Japanese as a whole are assuming a deliberately threatening attitude toward us. This, as the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* recently remarked, is not the most likely way of securing concessions from the United States.

Most Japanese probably think that a duel between the two countries would result in a victory for Japan. Many of them think of Americans and Europeans generally as a rather effeminate race, incapable of enduring hardship, whose men are lovers of luxury and whose women shirk child-bearing. They are convinced that we are making a ruthless use of the power of money and they have no anxiety as to the outcome of a contest between American gold and Japanese valor.

But it is not likely that informed military men are under any such illusion of victory. No doubt they would risk war rather than give up their armaments, but the general sense of danger is worth more to them than war itself would be. If they came to believe war a necessity, they would, of course seek allies. A duel would quickly end were the United States to achieve a signal naval victory or to force the Japanese navy to remain in its home ports leaving its overseas commerce unprotected. This would mean the immediate loss to Japan of all her gains in China and might involve the loss of Korea as well. Every day's delay in suing for peace would hasten the approach of utter economic collapse and starvation. Considering the present relative strength of the two navies, such a decisive victory or such effective "bottling" is a probability to be reckoned with in the event of a duel.

American policy then, should follow three main streams:

(1) Everything possible should be done to bring home to the Japanese people the relatively unaggressive and peaceable character of our intentions and policy. Such unofficial visits as that of Mr. Frank A. Vanderlip are of immense service. Americans should be grateful, also, for the object lesson afforded the Japanese and other Far Eastern peoples by the lives among them of European and American missionaries of Christianity. Many

Japanese, especially, of course, those possessing vested interests in Buddhism, oppose and resent the presence of the Christian priests and religious women. But their life and conversation, year in and year out, go further than any other one factor toward giving the lie to the lurid generalizations about the white races which form part of the anti-American and anti-foreign propaganda. Residents in foreign trading communities in the Far East often voice a not always unintelligible antagonism and irritation against the missionary, but there can be little doubt that these merchants profit greatly by the respect won for their race rather by the missionaries than by themselves.

(2) Everything should be done to confirm militarists in the opinion (which they doubtless already entertain) that a duel between Japan and the United States would probably bring disaster upon them. With the growth of this conviction, the anti-American propaganda would be dropped as unprofitable.

(3) Anglo-American friendship should be the key-note of American policy. The Japanese inspired press gives an amazing amount of space to all news suggesting the growth of friction between the United States and Great Britain. Every English-speaking people in the world should feel moved by both sentiment and interest to remove all outstanding causes of friction as between these peoples and to enter upon such a special understanding (call it arbitration treaty, league, or "association of nations") as will make armed conflict between such peoples impossible. "War is unthinkable" has always been a dangerous bit of sentimentality. After the events of the past five years nothing is more thinkable than war. But if an association of peoples akin in blood and tongue cannot prevent war among those peoples, then leagues which essay a larger content are merely grandiose. If, on the other hand, the attempt within this limited field should prove, as it ought and must, a success, we shall have the nucleus of a valid world association.

If the American people will set themselves to develop a foreign policy following the lines just suggested, war in the Far East will be rendered extremely improbable.

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